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Soviet Survey

AN ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL TRENDS IN THE U.S.S.R.

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LITERARY TRENDS IN EASTERN EUROPE

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PART I

Introduction: SOVIET LITERATURE

'The Conspiracy of Silence'

OUR present number is devoted to a review of intellectual currents in four Eastern European countries: East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Bulgaria, with special reference to the after-effects of the original Soviet 'thaw' in 1956 and the subsequent upheaval in Poland and Hungary. The two last-named countries are not included for good and sufficient reasons—the chief one being that they have lately furnished the subject-matter for a great deal of critical attention abroad. By contrast, the four remaining Soviet-controlled countries in Eastern Europe have not received the same degree of attention. It is generally assumed that their cultural life, and in particular their literature, reflects the absence or near-absence of those currents of rebellion generally lumped together under the label 'de-Stalinisation.' If this mental picture is not entirely accurate, it does at any rate portray an important aspect of the situation. The four studies contributed to this issue by specialist writers suggest that critical and rebellious undercurrents have not been entirely lacking, but that hitherto they have not markedly shaken the official edifice.

An analysis of the East European literary scene cannot, however, entirely by-pass the parallel developments in the U.S.S.R., and this not merely because—as the recent political upheaval has once more demonstrated—the Soviet Union still sets the tone for public life in all the 'people's democracies.' To take first of all the possible significance of this latest convulsion, it may not be out of place to issue a word of warning against a tendency in some quarters to extrapolate from the political to the in-

tellectual field. The Soviet leaders have already gone out of their way to make it clear that they do not at this stage intend to encourage a resumption of last year's cultural libertinism. *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on July 7th, i.e. after the extrusion of the defeated group from the leadership, voiced the carefully formulated charge that there had been a certain link between the nefarious activities of the deposed leaders and 'the revisionism and nihilism which for some time past has gripped certain writers.' However strange this reasoning may appear to past students of Mr. Molotov's or Mr. Kaganovich's behaviour, it is apparently part of the official case against them—or if not against them personally, then against their allies, Mr. Malenkov and Mr. Shepilov. Concerning the latter's activities as Party controller in the field of ideology, the same paper noted that despite his well-known 'fondness for making lengthy speeches,' he had remained strangely silent at a recent meeting of the presidium of the writers' union where the idea of creative freedom was hotly debated. Mr. Shepilov's silence on this occasion, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* explained to its readers, had been dictated by his evident desire to use the writers as an instrument in the struggle against the Party leadership. Such charges, whether well-founded or not, may be regarded as evidence that the issue of intellectual freedom has become involved in the activities of competing leadership groups. This can be regarded as an encouraging sign, but it does not follow that the current trend is actually in the direction of liberalisation. There is no evidence that Mr. Khrushchev regards himself as a patron of liberalism. He has been reported as having told a recent meeting of Soviet writers that 'his hand would not tremble' if the Soviet leadership found it necessary to shoot a few writers, as in his opinion the Hungarian leadership should have done to avert last October's 'counter-revolution.' Such remarks may be taken as an implied compliment to the importance of the intellectual in the Soviet system, but they do not support the optimistic conclusions drawn by some observers from the most recent shift in the power struggle. There is in fact nothing to suggest that the removal of figures like Malenkov and Shepilov—who may, for opportunistic reasons, have encouraged a measure of liberalisation in the arts, and are now lumped with the old-guard Stalinists—is likely to benefit the struggling Soviet intellectuals.

What can be said with certainty is that the prevailing trend has for a number of months been heavily adverse to the kind of limited and severely controlled freedom of discussion which established itself during the brief interval between the 20th Party Congress and the Hungarian uprising. In retrospect 1956 may well take on the appearance of a brief spring time of quasi-liberalism. There was Dudintsev's celebrated novel, *Not By Bread Alone*, and there were other, though minor, works of the same genre by writers like D. Granin, S. Kirsanov, A. Yashin and others. Entire committees of the writers' union, notably those in Moscow and Leningrad, seemed to have been infected with the new spirit. Now a reaction has set in. Dudintsev was already under fire before the Hungarian uprising. He has since receded even further in official favour, although his novel is being published in book form. The tone of literary officialdom is in some respects swinging back to that of the Zhdanov period. The publication last June of photographs of a garden party in which the party leadership met some of the leading writers, artists and musicians, is no substitute for the limited degree of intellectual freedom which at one moment appeared to have been secured by the writers and their friends.

The brief but significant distance travelled since then is best gauged by a study of two important recent gatherings of Soviet intellectuals: the plenary meeting last March of the Moscow writers' union, and the third plenary meeting of the Soviet writers' union in mid-May. Taken in conjunction with the speeches and articles surrounding these events, they enable one to mark the point now reached in the continuing struggle between literature and literary officialdom.

At the earlier of the two congresses, the proponents of orthodoxy were in a minority and there ensued a lively debate around the collective publications of the Moscow writers' section, such as *Literaturnaya Moskva*—whose second issue featured a number of highly unorthodox contributions—and the internal bulletin *Moskovski Literator*. Unlike Konstantin Simonov, who took the opportunity to trim his sails to the prevailing wind with a form

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:cantation of views previously uttered by him
ıd others in the journal *Novy Mir*, the editors
ıd contributors of *Literaturnaya Moskva*
:fused to bow to official pressure. Thus the
:tack against them had to be continued at the
hird plenum' of the writers' union in the
›llowing May, when as on previous occasions
:any leading authors signified their displeasure
ith the stage-managed proceedings by ab-
:nting themselves or failing to take part in the
ebates. As before, most of the public speech-
aking fell to the lot of literary officials—ably
:conded by some provincial writers who
arked their provincialism by rigid insistence
ı Zhdanovist canons. The only major author
› join the discussion, Konstantin Fedin (whose
›eech was reported at length in *Pravda* on
ıne 16th), though in general loyal enough to
ıe official line, avoided the harsher strictures
velled against the 'opposition.'

Of these charges, that of factionalism (*gruppovshchina*') was at once more traditional ıd less original than its companion accusation, ıat of having indulged in a 'conspiracy of lence.' Factionalism refers to the alleged actice of certain people (e.g. the editors of *iteraturnaya Moskva* or the Leningrad maga-ne *Priboi*) to band together with a view to esenting a common outlook—a tendency hich outside the U.S.S.R. would not be garded as a major crime, even if it took the rm of collectively failing to confess. 'Con-racy of silence' by contrast signifies an ›stinate unwillingness to make any public atement at all, orally or in print. How riously this behaviour is regarded by the ıardians of orthodoxy may be judged from e impassioned declamation uttered by one of eir number, L. Sobolev, at the aforementioned ird plenary meeting:

'Your silence is dangerous. It causes disori-ıtation among the readers. What does it mean? 'hat does it conceal? An arrogant contempt r the opinion of others? A contemptuous lief in one's own infallibility? An insulting How could you possibly understand us?" ıe pathos of readiness for sacrifice? What does is silence signify? We do not understand it, ither does the people . . . Do you know what came known to me yesterday and what ocked me . . . so that I felt compelled to ›unt the platform and excite myself beyond the measure permitted by my physician? That in the Western press hypocritically friendly sentiments are being voiced concerning you, you who should speak today but do not. That a "friendly" hand is being extended towards you? That they are ready to embrace you . . . that a rope is ready for you that would draw you even further away from your own people? Do you know that you are being enjoined to commit "the heroic act of being silent"? The heroics of silence! What strange and poisonous words! Be silent . . . and you will obtain recognition! You will have friends, your heroic act will be recognised by history!'

Sobolev concluded his angry tirade by voicing the fervent hope that those in question would not after all follow such 'diabolical advice' (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, May 22.) His charges, like those made by others, were in the main directed against such writers as Margerita Aligher, E. Kazakevich and their colleagues among the editors of the Moscow literary almanac. But representatives of the young generation, praised only yesterday as true exponents of 'socialist realism' (Evtushenko, Tendryakov), likewise came under fire. Complaints were voiced from all sides about 'the dirt that has been introduced into our literature and literary life,' 'the semi-literate riff-raff that has begun to proliferate,' 'the lack of resistance to bourgeois propaganda masked in socialist phraseology,' 'hysterical intellectuals who raise wails about this or that,' 'demands for anarchic freedom,' 'pompous slogans about the right to have convictions,' and 'petty-bourgeois voraciousness' (all quoted from *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, May 21-22 and June 6).

K. Simonov and Olga Bergholtz were the first to recant; after that it was the turn of the others. On June 16, *Pravda* in a brief note announced that at a Moscow writers' meeting Kazakevich had made a statement confessing his errors, and that a letter from M. Aligher along similar lines had been read out (the contents were not made public). A. Rudny, the editor of *Moskovski Literator*, was replaced, and a parallel reshuffle took place among the editors of *Novy Mir*. As to *Literaturnaya Moskva*, whose fate for the moment remains unknown, one of the principal charges against it was that it had originally been published 'without an editorial apparatus approved by the Party,' and

that most of its contributors 'worked at home' (cf. *Lit. Gazeta*, May 21). Clearly a state of affairs not likely to endure for long.

Compared with the opening months of 1956, the literary magazines published in the U.S.S.R. now make depressing reading. The purge has been widespread and has not been confined, as officialdom would have it, to a particular 'faction' in Moscow. There is evidence that the Leningrad magazine *Priboi* had for some time been trying to circumvent the official censorship. *Priboi* was edited by Vera Panova, Vera Ketlinskaya and Yuri German—three outstanding authors. It can hardly be reckoned an accident that according to *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (June 15), Panova, Gorelov (editor of another literary almanac that had got into trouble), Ketlinskaya and German were unaccountably absent from the Party meeting summoned to consider their sins. 'Here too there had been a reflection of the notorious feat of silence.' (*Ibid.*)

It is perhaps too much to expect that in the climate currently prevailing in the U.S.S.R. these and other writers will be allowed to persist in this silent demonstration of non-conformism. What remains encouraging is the spectacle of mute resistance on the part of leading Soviet authors to a type of Party control which in 1947-48 was readily accepted by a sizeable number among them. Zhdanov had the support or acquiescence not merely of Party officials and fanatics, but of some leading intellectuals who accepted his picture of an irreconcilable struggle necessitating strict Party control. In 1957 only the backwoods still yield people ready to subscribe to the official thesis that literature must unendingly toe the Party line. The present attitude of the intellectual elite has been described by a French writer whose own sympathies are decidedly on the Communist side and who recently had occasion to visit the U.S.S.R. and to converse with Soviet intellectuals. He too was struck by the 'conspiracy of silence.' As regards Hungary, 'nobody affects to believe that it was a question of shooting a handful of Fascists . . . apart from some fanatics I encountered people who had been profoundly wounded . . . . Their reserve should be understood as the natural prudence of fighters who are reluctant to expose themselves prematurely when they have to conserve their energies for a long campaign' (Vercors, in *Le Monde*, May 8-9, 1957). Events will show whether the present silence is indeed a sign of prudence or a symptom of resignation.

PART II

THE INTELLECTUAL SCENE IN EAST GERMANY

by Heinz Kersten

THE theme of this paper is the impact of de Stalinisation on literature and intellectual lif in East Germany, but as a preliminary it may b useful to give a brief sketch of the personalitie and tendencies at work. It is a mistake to thin of the literary intelligentsia in East Germany a a homogeneous stratum; there are in fact thre clearly distinguishable groups: the 'veteran who had already won a reputation before 193 and who in their majority were Communist even then; new talents who have come to ligh since the war; and lastly writers of no particula literary distinction whose work faithfully reflect the changing requirements of the regime an who should perhaps be regarded as publicist rather than authors. Those belonging to th first two categories are in turn divided alon lines determined by their own individual pas with its inevitable reflection in their work What they have in common is a commitment t socialism—which many of them regard a having been substantially realised in Ea Germany—a rejection of bourgeois society and a markedly anti-Fascist mentality. The attitude towards the S.E.D. (Socialist Unit Party) regime, whose blemishes they ca scarcely overlook, is frequently ambivalent; i some cases it reflects the general dilemma o the left-wing intellectuals; in others, it is a co sequence of the subtle corruption promoted b the regime's policy of making life agreeable fo those who support its aims.

The pre-1933 veterans grew up in an atm sphere of hostility to the Weimar Republic an after 1933 became emigrants, for the most pa in Western countries rather than in the U.S.S.R These determinants have placed their stamp upo their literary work which is difficult to fit in the prescribed mould of 'socialist realism.' I general they have failed to recapture th artistic level they reached before 1933 or 194 such as it is, their literary output is large centred upon the past, and in particular upo

he years of anti-Fascist struggle. Thus, to take he most notable example of all, Bertolt recht published nothing new after he settled in ast Germany, save for a few dramatic re-rrangements and some unimportant poems. o far as can be judged, his literary remains do ot appear to contain anything of importance ritten during this period. Johannes R. Becher's ork since 1945 consists of a three-volume reatise on literature and a handful of in-gnificant poems, some quite abnormally banal content. Anna Seghers, once a novelist of onsiderable power, has produced little of nterest, her main contribution, apart from some hort stories, being the novel 'The Dead Remain oung.' Bodo Uhse is understood to be at ork on a novel dealing with the Communists the resistance movement, 'The Patriots,' of hich one volume has appeared. Ludwig Renn—efore 1933 the best-known anti-war writer after emarque—has published recently an un-onvincing World War II novel, 'War Without attle': for the rest he has branched out into hildren's literature, an odd though possibly gnificant choice. Willi Bredel's recent works, novel called 'The Grandchildren' and a enario for a film dealing with the life of the erman Communist leader Ernst Thaelmann, re likewise characteristically located in the ast. The only member of the group to grapple ith the present, Hans Marchwitza, made an rthodox choice with a novel entitled 'Crude on' and having for its theme the construction f 'the first socialist city of the German Demo-atic Republic,' Stalinstadt (once known as uerstenberg). In addition to these veteran Com-unists the older generation also included hm Welk, known for his novels of village life; rnold Zweig, whose 'Sergeant Grischa' cycle as culminated in a feeble fourth part, 'The ruce'; the novelist Stefan Heym, a returnee om the United States, who has so far signalised is home-coming only as a publicist.

While these veterans seem to have their gaze rned firmly towards the past, the post-1945 eneration of literary talents does make an ttempt to grapple with the present. The results many cases are predictably stereotyped, while riginality makes itself felt only where the uthor has sought refuge among more innocuous bjects. This is true in particular of lyrical oetry; a poet like Stefan Hermlin, who stems from Eluard, cannot well conceal his Western antecedents. Franz Fuehmann, who returned in 1949 from imprisonment in Russia, displays a certain power of expression in the poem 'The Road to Stalingrad' and in his novel 'Comrades' (turned into a film under the title 'Duped till Doomsday'). Of this whole group only Erwin Strittmatter, a peasant novelist of the Brecht circle, displays a certain ability to deal poetically with the 'new life' theme constantly urged upon writers by the regime. Following an unsuccessful play on the subject of the 'new life' in the village, he scored a considerable literary success with the novel 'Tinko' whose plot is laid in the same milieu. For the rest, Karl Mundstock appears to be a writer of some epic talent, while a young playwright of the Brecht school, Peter Hacks, has made a stir with two historical dramas.

Like the majority of intellectuals, most of these writers welcomed the signs of liberal-isation after the 20th Soviet Party Congress and felt encouraged by the promise of greater freedom from the system of organised opinion manipulation. Even before Moscow gave the signal, the internal discussion preliminary to the East German writers' congress of January, 1956, and the congress itself, had witnessed signs of incipient rebellion against Party dictatorship in the arts. Such notabilities as Anna Seghers, Willi Bredel, Stefan Hermlin, and Becher himself—i.e. the Minister of Culture—appeared as standard-bearers of a demand for allowing the writer greater freedom. On the whole, the subsequent discussions were dominated by literary historians and critics. A gathering under their auspices, held on May 31 in East Berlin, became the stage for some hitherto suppressed criticism. The principal report on this occasion was delivered by Professor Hans Mayer, of Leipzig University, a non-party man and one of the leading historians of literature in East Germany, who took occasion to deplore the disappointing outcome of the writers' congress and to reject Ulbricht's (or rather Stalin's) description of the writer as an 'engineer of the soul.' The human soul 'is not a suitable object for an engineer . . .' Mayer also criticised Becher's assertion that East German literary life was rooted in the literature produced by the working class; in fact, a good many of its representatives stemmed from the middle-class. As to the causes of its evident weaknesses, '. . . we have failed to make

a clear distinction between science and art. We have furthermore interpreted consciousness narrowly, giving it a pan-political meaning and excluding all other subjects as contrary to the needs of our era. Thirdly, we have introduced a mechanical concept of the relationship between being and consciousness, ignoring the creative role of the superstructure. We have developed the notion that bad literature may be useful. We have again and again confused social commitment with practical usefulness. And finally, and worst of all, we have very often sinned against the truth.' These observations did not pass without opposition, notably from Klaus Gysi (appointed head of the *Aufbau* publishing house in succession to Walter Janka, who had been arrested in connection with the Harich affair), J. R. Becher, and above all Alfred Kurella, the head of the Leipzig Institute of Literature. On the whole, however, the meeting was marked by a hitherto unknown degree of tolerance for critical opinions.

Even plainer language was heard at a 'congress of young artists' held at Karl-Marx-Stadt (formerly Chemnitz) towards the end of June, 1956. On this occasion a group of young writers from East Berlin came forward with a very frank attempt to call things by their names and to urge a genuine break with Stalinism. Their spokesman, Heinz Kahlau, cited the Polish literary critic Jan Kott, and applied to the East German situation his self-critical remark about writers who 'justified reality at the expense of truth,' thus 'transforming contemporary history into mythology.' The German Marxists, he argued, had taken over from the U.S.S.R. the externals of 'an idealist symbolism' and 'sacrificed the truths of Marxism in the interests of cheap pseudo-realities,' while artists had turned themselves into 'propagandists for party resolutions and government decrees.' Kahlau also had an explanation for the relative ease with which these trends had been accepted, namely the 'petty-bourgeois' tendencies prevalent among many workers. 'People who fear for their domestic comfort cannot be expected to put up a fight, any more than functionaries who use their office cars for all purposes.' These remarks were not to the taste of the orthodox, but Kahlau found a good deal of support, having said in public what many of the younger artists had been muttering in private. Some newcomers—Manfred Streubel, Manfred Bieber (both students in East Berlin) and Jens Gerlach—backed his sallies and urged 'spiritual freedom' for artists. Streubel, a lyric poet, complained about the 'inflation' of such intrinsically healthy concepts as peace, friendship, homeland, etc. 'We have shouted ourselves hoarse and deafened people to the truth.' Poets had 'become intoxicated over a hypothetical future' instead of dealing with the imperfections of the present. Similar complaints were voiced by Gerlach and others.

Utterances such as these reflected the then prevailing mood among the younger intellectuals. To appreciate the ferment in their ranks one has to understand the psychology of this generation. It is composed of young people who have grown up under the East German regime and—like their predecessors under Hitler—have largely been insulated from external influences. Most of them come from working-class homes and owe their literary careers to the S.E.D. regime. In return, they were expected to place their talents at the regime's disposal, and a good many of them have done so quite freely and from conviction. Insofar as they were genuine artists, they then gradually came up against the realisation that a real development of their talents was impossible under the reign of a doctrinaire politico-cultural dictatorship which tried to squeeze everything into the Procrustean framework of a narrowly conceived 'socialist realism.' The condemnation of the Stalin cult and the consequent ideological debate had the additional effect of a political shock. Hitherto accepted values were shaken, and these young people found themselves confirmed in their growing doubt whether the East German reality could be regarded as corresponding to their socialist ideals. Not all of them reacted in the same manner, but all have in common an attitude of protest against official narrow-mindedness, and demand that the right of the individual to act according to his literary and moral conscience be respected in future.

By way of example let us consider briefly the personal histories of three representatives of this young generation. Heinz Kahlau, born in 1931, attended elementary school until 1945 when he became an apprentice worker and later a tractor driver. In 1950, during the course of a prolonged illness, he began to write poetry

Among his masters he included Mayakovsky, illon, Rimbaud, Sandburg, Whitman, Guillien, nd the German Communist writer Erich Veinert.) Subsequently he attended the East erlin arts academy for three years and became pupil of Brecht. Jens Gerlach, another youthful bel, was born in Hamburg in 1926, studied art story there after the war, and in 1953—having the meantime developed into a convinced ommunist—went to East Berlin where he ublished his own poetical work, and edited a ery readable anthology of recent German rical poetry—Eastern and Western. Armin lueller, aged 29, comes from a Silesian working-ass family and began his literary career, like so any others, in one of the working collectives youthful authors sponsored by the East erman writers' federation. He produced what-ver was required and in a short while had dvanced to a prominent place as an F.D.J. Communist Youth) bard who celebrated the ew life' in verse of impeccable banality. Then me the de-Stalinisation crisis, and Armin lueller—who had sung a hymn to Stalin's mmortality' on the occasion of the dictator's eath—found his beliefs crumbling. After a ngthy period of silence he at last published a oem in May, 1956, (in the weekly organ of the eague of Culture, *Sonntag*) which for the rst time displayed some genuine poetic feeling. ere he laid bare the inner conflicts now behind m, and tried to justify his previous attitudes. a letter published at the same time he sought guard against the suspicion of being anxious exculpate himself: 'I entered literature at a me when dogmatic signposts had already been t up. I came blindly from the past, lived opefully through the period of changes, and ok an active part in going through them. I had reason to doubt the usefulness of the sign-osts. I joined the parade, and did so in the firm onviction that my verse was helpful to the w age. Where, I should like to know, could the sistance of which you speak have come from? is true that, very late, there came a time when I lt an urge to breathe more freely, that I was nhappy, constricted. For long I did not under-and why the words would not come, why I ould not write any more. Now I know.'

Mueller's poem was not the only one which oiced a new urge to speak the truth. A few ther truthful poets of the same mind were like-wise able to publish in *Sonntag*. The organ of the F.D.J. students' organisation, *Forum*, began to echo the mood of the intellectuals who had attended the 'congress of young artists.' Alone among East German publications, *Forum* reported (though not in full) Kahlau's remarks. They included one from Gerhard Zwerenz, a young writer who had already irked the officials of culture by writings which strayed from the prescribed path. Zwerenz is an alumnus of the Leipzig Institute of Philosophy, whose director until last March was the somewhat unorthodox Marxist philosopher, Professor Ernst Bloch—now forced into retirement and made a scapegoat for the nonconformism of his students. When Ulbricht loosed his blast against the Institute, and against opposition-minded intellectuals generally, Zwerenz was promptly accused of having smuggled ideological contraband into the Party 'under the banner of the fight against dogmatism.' These heretical ideas were described as being 'substantially in accordance with the aims of the counter-revolution and the Hungarian Petoefi-circle, as well as the (East German) Harich group.' In September, 1956, before the Hungarian upheaval, Zwerenz had, in fact, written a letter to *Forum* in which he commented on Kahlau's speech in the following terms: 'Who can be surprised if some sections of our youth tend to become dissatisfied, embittered, even cynical? . . . We thought we were helping the Party. Is this situation not conducive to bitterness? It arises in everyone who possesses a sense of honour, and must be strongest in the artist. How many of his most fundamental feelings did he have to violate these past few years because they seemed politically inopportune! Now he realises that in so doing he has hampered his own productivity, lost his power, violated the truth. And is this to pass off without bitterness? But what renders it wholly unbearable is that the artist is denied the right to shout his rage.'

Shouts of rage were indeed destined shortly to become distinctly unwelcome to officialdom. Since the end of 1956 silence has once more been imposed upon critics and non-conformists. Faced with what had happened in Poland and Hungary, the S.E.D. leadership felt obliged to halt the cautious liberalisation process in train since the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. This change inevitably affected the

discussion of literature and related subjects. The writers were once more called upon to close ranks and support the Party line. It is true that as early as November 9, 1956, the presidium of the East German writers' association had welcomed the Russian intervention in Hungary; various writers publicly condemned the 'counter-revolution'; and on December 4 the presidium capped its previous efforts by issuing a declaration of loyalty towards the Ulbricht government in Pankow; but these gestures could not conceal the uneasiness prevalent in the ranks. When the central committee of the S.E.D. gathered late in January, 1957, Willi Bredel, on behalf of the Communist writers, let the cat out with remarks like the following:

'During the past year, following the disclosure of certain details from Comrade Khrushchev's speech at the 20th Congress of our fraternal party in the U.S.S.R., concerning the results of the personality cult, our writers experienced many and profound emotional torments. At that time talk and discussion among the writers more or less replaced literary creation. This phase has now been terminated. Most of those concerned had already overcome their depression by the autumn. When last October the events in Hungary assumed the character of a national tragedy, some of our writers became subject to certain vacillations, notably those who had a high opinion of Hungarian authors or scholars who had taken the lead in violent criticism of Rakosi and Geroe, people like George Lukacs, Julius Hay, and Tibor Dery.'

On February 8, 1957, the official organ of the S.E.D., *Neues Deutschland*, trained its guns upon critics of the reigning school in literature. The article, by Konrad Schwalbe, clearly bore the imprint of official inspiration. It made the point that 'under the cover of a literary "dispute" certain aims are being pursued which go beyond the elimination of specific principles in the fields of literary scholarship and cultural policy.'

This article appeared in print just when the delegates' conference of the writers' association was about to assemble in East Berlin (February 8-10). A resolution adopted at this meeting rejected 'National Communism' and expressed a commitment to 'socialist realism' in the arts. The discussion turned largely upon an article by Professor Hans Mayer, published in *Sonntag* on December 4, 1956, under the title 'The Present State of our Literature,' which had already furnished the text for some of Schwalbe's counter-critical remarks (though without mention of the author). In this article Mayer expanded and further articulated the views he had already expressed at the writers' meeting in the preceding spring (cf. *supra*). He may have been encouraged by the concurrent debate in the U.S.S.R. which had for its theme the revaluation of the literature produced in the 'twenties. Thus he went out of his way to contrast the literary wealth of that era with the paucity of creative work in the present. 'If we want to change the current literary climate, we must finally get down to confrontation with modern art and literature in the widest sense. There must be an end to the present state of affairs, where Kafka has to be bootlegged and interest in Faulkner and Thornton Wilder is treated as the counterpart of illegal activity . . . . For the rest a good many administrative and bureaucratic obstacles will have to be got out of the way if there is to be a change for the better in our literary life.'

So far as the literary field is concerned, this was the boldest attempt yet made to challenge the official dogmatism in the realm of culture. It was also the last occasion on which heretical views could be openly proclaimed as part of the relatively 'open' discussion inaugurated by the 20th Party Congress in the U.S.S.R. The two responsible editors of the journal in which Mayer's article appeared, Gustav Just and Heinz Zoeger, had meantime been arrested in connection with the Harich affair. Presumably it was they who had made it possible for the article to appear in *Sonntag*. Originally, the text was intended for a radio broadcast, but the programme controllers of the official *Deutschlandsender* turned it down as being 'too pessimistic' and 'not constructive.' This decision already reflected the change of atmosphere after the Hungarian rising. When the article appeared in print, it inevitably provoked a reaction from the official side, including counter-attacks in *Sonntag* and speeches at the delegates' conference of the writers' union. The Acting Minister of Culture, Alexander Abusch, accused Mayer of distorting facts and relinquishing 'the class position' in literary valuation, while Kurella, who went furthest in counter-attacking Mayer's thesis, altogether denied the relevance

tistic criteria and the problem of form. Yet e organ of the writers' union, *Neue Deutsche teratur*, editorially welcomed Mayer's inter- ntion, though with some qualifications; it ereby demonstrated that he had touched upon problem of common concern to those engaged literature and literary criticism, which others well as himself regarded as important. For a finition of socialist realism, Abusch fell back on a formulation in the Soviet Party organ mmunist: 'It is the modern form of realism r the realistic method is not fixed, but subject constant development) enriched by the ideology socialism.'

A more liberal interpretation of this concept plies the granting of greater latitude to artists. riting in *Einheit*, the theoretical organ of the E.D., in January, 1957, Abusch sought to aw the moral: 'All this means for our party a nstant duty to strengthen the ties between the iters and the party . . . by securing for all the eative forces of democratic and socialist erature and art a wide measure of activity, a nuine liberty of artistic creation, conforming the profoundly humanistic . . . essence of arxism-Leninism.' In exchange, the comrades tists were enjoined to relate their 'striving er artistic formulation of the truth . . . with e ideas of socialist humanism and the Leninist ncept of party-mindedness.' 'The writer mrades, like all other comrades, are subject the discipline of our Party.'

This familiar formulation suggests the frame- ork within which East German literature may expected to develop within the near future. e liberalising tendencies inaugurated last year ve been halted, and the Party leadership, in s field as in others, has accepted the challenge 'revisionism.' But a simple return to Stalinist actices seems unlikely, given the resistance w manifested by many of those active in the ltural sphere; to say nothing of the overriding tor—the example of the U.S.S.R.

PART III

PRESENT TRENDS IN ZECHOSLOVAK LITERATURE

by Karel Brusak

IE regimentation of literature in Czecho- vakia after the advent of the Communist Government in 1948 was undoubtedly the most perfect in the whole Soviet sphere. As the right to publish periodicals was reserved for public organisations approved and controlled by the regime, and the publishing of books concentrated in six publishing houses all closely connected with the Communist Party, no expression of dissatisfaction with the Zhdanov line was possible. Furthermore there was no liberalisation in Czechoslovak literature after the death of Stalin; whilst in Russia, Poland and Hungary one could perceive a gradual but continuous process towards this end, in Czechoslovakia there were only sporadic and isolated outbursts.

In 1954 a few young critics were allowed to question the artistic value of poems celebrating with false optimism the efforts of youth in building up socialism, but these critical voices were soon silenced. After the Geneva conference in 1955 it seemed that a more liberal climate might emerge. Vítězslav Nezval, perhaps the greatest living Czech poet, the friend of Breton and Tzara and one of the pillars of surrealism before the war, published an article on Guillaume Apollinaire.[1] Through the medium of the masterly translations of Karel Čapek, Apollinaire had a great influence on Czech poetry immediately after the First World War, but since 1948 had been (together with the majority of Western poets) on the index for alleged bourgeois decadence and formalism. Although Nezval's article was no more than a rather pathetic protest against the tedium of poetry continually '*played on one string*,' he was rebuked by the official critic, Milan Jariš, in the strongest terms. Later, the Chairman of the Writers' Association, Jan Drda, issued a warning against those '*unprincipled people who had begun whirling about like weather-cocks in the Geneva wind*.'

However, after the Congress of the Soviet Party in February 1956, a conference of Czechoslovak writers was announced and in the course of the usual discussions before its convocation more outspoken voices began to be heard. For the first time since 1948, it was admitted that '*the results in literature have not been satisfactory*.' This was ascribed to the damaging

[1] In *Literární noviny*, the weekly of the Association of Czechoslovak Writers, August 27, 1955. Subsequently referred to as *LN*.

influence of the personality cult. Once the door had been opened to criticism, people who had long been silent began to complain. The picture of literary life as reflected in these complaints is a familiar one. Isolation from the West: '*Literature from the West became the privilege of a few chosen people . . . .* ' Orientation of literature in accordance with the official ideology: '*Marx and Lenin were endowed with every merit, and it was seriously asserted that they elaborated a comprehensive aesthetic system, although this is not true.*' The only mood officially permitted: '*Smiling optimism—all conflicts banned from literature.*'[2] The result was that writers lied about the successes of the regime and were silent about its failures, as one of them confessed in an article revoking some of his previous works. He admitted that in a project about which he had written with great optimism, conditions were in fact far from good. The administration made foolish demands, altered plans, and well-meaning people were put in prison. One of the leading engineers committed suicide and said before his death: '*They only lie or keep silent. They don't tell us the truth. What are we building? . . . Everything is falseness, deception, filth.*' The author wrote that the purpose of his article was to defend the honour of tens of thousands of people whose work, enthusiasm, and often lives had been wasted, and after admitting that he himself had lied to them, promised never again to write anything of whose truth he was not convinced in his conscience. He ended with a challenge to writers: '*You are the public conscience! You are the public control! Do not dare to deal with truth in the same ignominious way as in the past! We are ready to believe you once more. We are awaiting your word of truth.*'[3]

When the Association of Czechoslovak Writers met in Prague between April 22 and 29 1956, the main points on which the majority of members differed from the official leadership had already been formulated. The attitude of the Party as expressed in its Open Letter to the Congress was one of benevolence: '*Our Communist Party will never issue any directives to writers for their literary work. We have always stood against any regimentation of literature and against the fettering of its creative forces. We start from the basic conviction that a writer must always have full freedom to work out his artistic problems for himself. Of course the political aim of the Party is and always will be to win over in an open and honest way all artists to the cause of Socialism and Communism.*'[4] The modified Party line in literature was one of tolerance of moderate criticism as long as it was not directed against the socialist order; yet the writer should not be an objective witness but an active fighter against capitalism on the side of socialism. The opening speech of the Chairman of the Association, the novelist Jan Drda, was in this vein. But Drda's report was soon dismissed as a collection of banal phrases in the spirit of the well-known editorials, and speeches became livelier. On the whole delegates tended either to criticise the misdeeds of others or to confess their own guilt. For the first time it was publicly stated that writers had been silenced, that they were unable to publish their works, that they were ruined economically and driven to suicide. Concrete examples were given of the treble censorship: 'the voluntary one' which the writer imposed on himself and which was praised as a manifest expression of political consciousness, the censorship by the officials of the organisations controlling the publishing houses, and that of the 'supervising authorities.'

Several speakers confessed that they had not protested because they lacked courage; others said that their protests were never printed. By tacit convention the term Socialist Realism was not used at the Congress; it was called 'schematism' instead, and many agreed as to its effects.

The greatest impression was made by the speeches of two outstanding poets from the pre-war period, František Hrubín and Jaroslav Seifert, both of whom have been in disgrace since 1948. Hrubín spoke about the case of the great poet František Halas who was given a State funeral and whose work soon after his death was condemned by the official critics, of the poet Konstantin Biebl who was driven to suicide by bickering Party propagandists, and several other writers who had been silenced and persecuted. He said that he himself had been working for several weeks on a translation of Mallarmé's sonnet about the swan whose wings had frozen in the ice, according to the dictum

[2] Jan Koutík in *LN*, March 3, 1956.
[3] Ladislav Mňačko in *LN*, April 21, 1956.
[4] *Rudé Právo*, April 22, 1956.

poem remote from the present and its tasks and problems. Seifert went a step further than all the other speakers and made two pleas: that the silenced and expelled writers should be asked for their co-operation, and that the fate of those in prison should be made easier.

There was no doubt that the permitted limits had been transgressed and the regime decided to apply a brake. This was done by the President of the Republic, Antonín Zápotocký, himself, who did not speak at the Congress in his official function, but, being the author of three social novels, as a fellow writer. He accused of laziness and dishonesty those who said that they were driven to lying by prevailing conditions or fear, and dismissed the criticisms of Hrubín, Seifert and others as an attempt at personal profiteering. Indeed he branded them as politically unreliable: '*I recognise their poetical talent and I am all for their not being ignored as poets. But I do not recognise them as fighters and reliable pillars of the new Socialist life.*'[5] Although his speech could not dispel the general elation and enthusiasm for the previous arguments, it was evident that the Congress would not bring any palpable results.

The leading article in the official organ of the Association published immediately after the Congress was a revaluation from the regime's point of view. It was untrue to say that the whole of Czechoslovak literature was poisoned with ies, the critics had been falsely exaggerating the difficulties. Seifert was wrong in comparing the faults of writers striving after a Socialist literature with the criminal guilt of the enemies of Socialism, and his ideas must be rejected.[6] Even if writers were ready to work in accordance with their own independent and liberal ideas they still lacked the most important thing—the means to publish and propagate their works. Of this they were bluntly reminded by one of the representatives of the Stalinites: '*The right to publish periodicals is reserved for institutions of State importance.*'[7]

A period of uneasy expectation followed but as the discussion in Poland grew louder it was no longer possible to ignore it. Yet it was not the writers but the younger criticswho began to discuss Socialist Realism. The last shock was given by the Hungarian revolution. Serious differences began to develop between writers and the Party apparatus, particularly in Slovakia, and the Secretary of the Slovak Party, Karol Bacílek, in a speech in December, 1956, reprimanded certain authors for succumbing to 'bourgeois anarchism and liberalism,' warning them that the Party had control of the means of publication and would not publish everything that they wished. He also appealed to the '*sound Communist kernel*' in the Association of Slovak writers to restore order both within the organisation and its paper.[8] The Association stood firm and the only effect of this speech was that two of the staunchest Stalinites, the authoress Katarina Lazarová and the novelist František Hecko resigned. At the Congress of the Slovak Communist Party in April of this year, Bacílek again spoke against liberal tendencies, the subjectivist approach and wrong points of view amongst authors, but does not seem to have had any more success than before.

Compared with the Stalin era the present situation is considerably easier. The works of many writers, both living and dead, whose names were hitherto on the index are now being published again or at least being discussed in print. Articles appear on such decadent authors as Kafka, and there is a new review devoted to foreign literatures. During the first five months of this year 51 translations from Western literatures were printed as against 42 from Russia and the 'people's democracies.' But with the exception of Greene's *The Quiet American* and Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, these are mainly of classic authors or those officially recognised as progressive. Translations of the controversial works of Ehrenburg, Panova, Nekrasov and Dudintsev remain unpublished. Those authors who were imprisoned have not yet been released.

It is in the field of criticism that liberalisation is most apparent. The critics are most outspoken in their treatment of Socialist Realism, contacts with the West and other controversial questions; they put forward the claim formulated in an illegal manifesto in 1942 by the novelist Vladislav Vancura, who was executed by the

[5] *LN*, April, 29, 1956.
[6] *LN*, May 12, 1956.
[7] Ludvík Veselý in *LN*, June 2, 1956.
[8] *Pravda*, the daily of the Slovak Communist Party, December 14, 1956.

Nazis: '*For the development of literature, art, and all spiritual life it is necessary that every writer, artist and scientist should have absolute freedom of thought, work and expression.*'[9] But the signs of the new climate in creative work are rather meagre. Here the discussion seems to have had a paralysing effect. Novelists shun contemporary themes. On the other hand, the short stories published deal mainly with the present. Writers who remain faithful to schematism carry on as before without worrying about criticism, often severe or ironical. The followers of the new trend are somewhat lost. They have abolished 'positive heroes,' try to portray society in an objective way and give much documentary evidence about the unsatisfactory state of affairs, but both the social order and its master builders are still taboo.

A real change has taken place in poetry which has always been the main strength of Czechoslovak literature. Poems celebrating the building of Socialism are no longer written. Czech poetry is now erotic, meditative, satirical, and even has religious undertones. The new poems mirror reality in the same harsh light as their Polish counterparts, but they are less descriptive in character than Wazyk's now famous *Poem for Adults*, and their psychology is subtler. The work of the younger poets would appear to the Western reader to be somewhat outdated in its approach and method, and also naive or eclectic, as one poet may echo many different influences, Verlaine, Rilke, Pasternak, T. S. Eliot, Edgar Allan Poe. After having lived for so long in uniform, the young poets try to wrap their ideas in various foreign garments before being able to design their own.

An inadequate prose translation cannot do full justice to a poem but may give some idea of the general mood. Milan Kundera, who was reproached by the Soviet critic V. Ogniev for his negative attitude towards Socialist Realism, is prominent among the young poets not remote from existentialism. In his poem *The Trap* he gives a day in the life of a clerk. '*In the evening he lies down next to his wife / And casts everything away. / He forgets everything / Falling into her as one falls into the water.*' When he wakes up in the morning, he sees '*the dirty yellow sun outside, / Discarded shoes under the table, / A bust bodice on a chair, / And on his side / All flesh / All skin an pores / His formless sleeping wife, / Heavy as withered meteor.*' He flees from her to his work '*The time-recording clock, / The cloakroom, th desk and papers, / Soup, meeting, a useless dis cussion / And back again, desk and papers, / I the evening the darkness rounds it up.*' He flee back to his flat, lies with his wife, and th meaningless circle of his existence is complete '*There in his wife he forgets / Life, the world, an his wife.*'

There are poems with a trend towards th formation of new myths, like those by Vladimí Holan, an older poet who has long been silent His recently published *Ode to Joy*, to which h significantly added the date 1949, captures th frustration of a servant girl living in a world o her own. '*She had a feeling of being a child an therefore of immortality, / She was once agai nine years old, nine are the angelic choirs, / As child she loved to sing when the Christmas cak smelt nice, / She knew nothing of the sex of th moon / That opened painfully like the mouth of fish being filleted.*' A description of her scrubbin the floor is heavy with erotic symbolism: '*Fat himself, not knowing how to be worthy of he love, / Forced her head down on the floor next t the bucket of purest water / Flowing from th fabulous Clashing Rocks Symplegades. / Sh scrubbed the floor wiping it with the wig of a falle angel . . . / Her scrubbing had something of weaver's shuttle / Weaving a carpet for Chris the Lord, / Her scrubbing had something of th acme of Chaldean astrology / Knocked down to th two stars of her knees. / While she was scrubbin the Word and Love were seeking each other / An when they met there was silence.*' The *Ode t Joy* ends incongruously. Trying to ward off fly the girl accidentally knocks down a paraffi lamp, is burnt, and dies two days later.

Even poems with religious inspiration ar now appearing, like *The Wooden Christ* b Kamil Bednář, another poet who was barre from publication for a long time and whos case was mentioned during the Congress. '*Let u kneel in our words, / Let us kneel in our meto phors, / Let us enter life as a church, / Ignorin the straw left by Herod's mercenaries, / Broth and sister, / We should have the Gospel / In ou eyes, / In our mouths, / In our steps and deeds / A our beginning and our end.*'

One of the forms with a wide popular appe

[9] Květoslav Chvatík in *Nový život*, No. 12, 1956.

is the animal fable. A good example is the biting satire *Principles of An Experienced Canary* by the young poet Miloš Macourek. An experienced canary should know that it is important '*Not to sing just anything | That comes to your mind | But to sing a song | Fitting for a canary | A canary in a cage, | To execute trills, | Sing lightly and clearly, | Not to sing about the cage | But rather about bird food, | Not to think selfishly about oneself | But to sing even about dried flies | In the name of the goldfish living in an aquarium | Who cannot sing | Being, | As is well known, | Dumb.*'

Unlike their Polish or Hungarian colleagues, the Czechoslovak writers did not enforce the liberalisation of culture on the regime and they were rather slow to seize the opportunity to obtain greater freedom. Nevertheless, they were well on the way; but recently there have been signs of a possible intervention by the Party. At a meeting of the Central Committee in June, during a discussion on ideological questions, several speakers criticised the attitude of the Czechoslovak writers. Their views were embodied in the resolution published after the meeting, which bluntly stressed that '*spontaneity, ideological passivity, lack of ideas, and amorphousness in art are unacceptable to the Party,*' and that '*art should serve the fight for Communism.*'

It remains to be seen whether the Czechoslovak writers will go back. As one of them expressed it: '*Neither the 20th Congress nor the Congress of Czechoslovak writers can be undone. None of us with any sense of honour can possibly withdraw anything. Not any more. We could only withdraw ourselves.*'[10]

PART IV

THE PREDICAMENT OF RUMANIAN LITERATURE

by Lionel Bloch

LIKE other nations which attained sovereignty within the last 100 years, the Rumanians like to emphasise the antiquity of their culture and the ancient lineage of their civilisation. Many a distinguished chronicler can be found in the history of Rumanian literature of the 16th and 17th century. Nevertheless, it was only in the first half of the 19th century—just before the official adoption of the Latin alphabet in Wallahia and Moldova—that Rumanian literature entered its 'modern phase.'

Generally speaking, from 1848 to 1946 Rumanian culture was dominated by what was known as 'le génie de la France.' In Bucovina and Transylvania—which were returned to Rumania in 1918—literary fashions followed Vienna rather than Paris. French was the language of the educated upper-classes. Already during the last century, many intellectuals, including the poet Vasile Alexandri, derided the excessive and indiscriminate imitations of French fashion in art and speech, but in spite of such protests by patriotic purists, social snobbery and the undeniable attractions of the French spirit combined to make the supremacy of French influence unchallengeable.

When the Communists came to power in 1946, the Rumanian intelligentsia was thus faced with the painful problem of abrupt reorientation—ideologically, and in a sense linguistically and geographically. The uncompromising nationalists were dismayed. Some fled the country, some remained prostrate, unwilling or unable to come to terms with the 'cultural' prescriptions of the Communists. Others tried to discover a 'modus vivendi.' They hoped that love for their fellow-men and the occasional use of a 'progressive' political incantation would make their writings acceptable to the Party. These illusions were shared by the intellectual Left, an inarticulate group of pacifists and middle-class Marxists. A typical representative of this group was the painter Maxy, a gifted disciple of Picasso, who shocked Bucharest before the war by exhibiting a canvas on which a circle was painted over a plain background ('the navel'). After the collapse of the Antonescu regime in 1944 Maxy emerged as the high-priest of 'engagement' and 'socialist art.' Unfortunately, although he abandoned cubism, he painted in a rather facile impressionist style. On the 1st of May 1948 the dead hand of Zhdanovism caught up with him. Maxy's mediocre drawing (workers on parade with red flags) which appeared on the front page of the weekly *Flacara* was authoritatively denounced in the official daily *Scantaia* and its author was dismissed as a degenerate cosmopolitan.

[10] *Kulturny zivot*, the weekly of the Association of Slovak Writers, December 22, 1956.

Although Maxy's sudden eclipse was not lamented it marked the beginning of the Zhdanovist era in Rumania. Ever since, neither Stalin's death, nor the so-called 'thaw' which followed in Russia, nor even the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, have affected the savage conformism with which the political controllers of Rumanian art imposed the spirit and letter of Zhdanovism. Subjected to constant intimidation, haunted by the spectre of starvation, many writers have submitted, at least nominally, to the requests of the Party. Yet if they had to sell their souls, one gains the impression that many were anxious not to sell them entire. Occasionally one can still detect a sparkle of non-conformism in their work—perhaps a discreet indiscretion which could prove useful should the Day of Judgment ever come.

The apparent conformism which is noticeable when one surveys the cultural panorama of Rumania is underlined by the fact that three of the most prominent literary figures of the country have made their peace with the Party: Mihaiv Sadoveanu, one of the foremost Rumanian novelists and a president of the National Assembly, George Calinescu, author of a History of Rumanian literature (1941) and, lately and half-heartedly, Tudor Arghezi, the greatest living Rumanian poet.

Mihaiv Sadoveanu, sometimes dubbed the Turgenev of Rumanian literature, became famous through his meandering historical novels and the unequalled skill with which he used the 'pastoral' vocabulary of the language. Already in 1930, his renown was such that he was elected President of the Senate (1930-1931). Under the dictatorship of Marshal Antonescu, Sadoveanu, then already a patriarchal figure, adopted a very cautious attitude, and this enabled him to come to terms with the Communists, who were only too pleased to accept the surrender of so notable a figurehead. Sadoveanu explains his collaboration with the Communists as the natural consequence of his preoccupation with the problem of the land and its peasants.

George Calinescu, Rumania's outstanding intellectual, is well known for his exuberant personality. Irrepressible and witty, he is to the Communist intelligentsia what the fool was to the tyrants of the Middle Ages: a servant—but an irreverent one. In 1946 he published 'Three Tales,' based on the revolutions of 1848 and 1907 and written with the obvious purpose of gainin favour with the Party. As it happened, versatilit did not help Calinescu, whose tales wer derided by the non-Communists as propagand and rejected by the Party as 'decadent.' Bu Calinescu persevered. His next effort, the nov 'Poor Ioanide,' was also rejected by the Party a the work of one who had practically no under standing of the materialist interpretation o history. It might be more correct to say tha Calinescu was not over-impressed with th Communist approach to history. In fact, h seems incapable of subordinating his literar fantasy to Party formulae. Nowhere is this mor obvious than in his last novel, 'The Blac Coffin,' long fragments of which have appeare in the monthly *Viata Romaneasca*. The nov portrays the Rumanian upper-classes mainl during the critical years of the last war. Calinesc clearly understands the conventions and psy chology of these people, the people of his clas He understands, for instance, the greedy collecto who visits a decrepit, bedridden old lady in th hope of getting her Guardi landscape. There ar some nightmarish passages about the bestiality German officers, sadistic orgies behind th German-Russian front line, etc.—somewhr reminiscent in style and conception of Erich Maria Remarque. But when it comes 'Positive Heroes' and the 'New Man' Calinesc fails. Not surprisingly, he has reached th conclusion that literary criticism is safer tha literary creation, and almost every week contributes a lengthy feature to *Contemporan* in which he discusses the classics of wor literature and similar 'safe' subjects.

Tudor Arghezi, the genius of mode Rumanian poetry, refused at first to suppo the regime, although he was one of the fe Rumanian writers who opposed the Germa openly during their virtual occupation of th country (1941-1944). In the last stage of th last war he published a famous lampo upon the German Ambassador, Baron Killing For this, Arghezi was sent to the Targul concentration camp from which he was releas in 1944. About 1948-49 his works ceased appear, but in 1956 he reached an unea understanding with the Party authorities a published some poems in which he described sufferings of the Rumanian peasants in the H old days of 1907.

'wo kinds of Poetry

Arghezi's non-conformism, however, has not sappeared completely. In a remarkable poem ıtitled 'Trisca' (The Shepherd's Flute), which ɔpeared in *Viata Romaneasca* in April, 1956, rghezi glorifies a poor flute-player whose un-ɔphisticated improvisations bewitched every-ɔdy. The fame of this poor man reached the ty and some learned music masters came to ɜten to the Trisca player's prodigious tunes. he masters tell the poor man that he cannot ɜe the flute properly because he knows nothing ɔout the theory of music (read Marxism-eninism). The poor man challenges the learned ɔctors to take his primitive instrument and ɜe it, whereupon the theoreticians withdraw ith great indignation ('we have no wish to ıck your spittle from this filthy one-holed ıstrument'). Arghezi's flute player was so poor ıat he did not even have a shirt but he had ieither sighs nor songs for sale,' as:

'Inspiration is not for sale,
For money or supplies,
You fear to touch the money when you feel
that there's something foul about it.'

It is interesting to note that the few expressions f despair and dissatisfaction which found their ay into print during the last 18 months came ɔ light in poetic works. Take for instance Miss Maria Banus' poem 'The Wax Dolls' *Viata Romaneasca*, November, 1956):

'How I hate you dolls of wax,
Hideous modern panopticum.
Is it a howl? Perhaps a gust of wind?
An agonising cry outside?
They grin with their infernal smiles . . .
Once upon a time there was revolt, pity,
Looks which lit up with a tear
Horrid wax masks—
You follow me during the day and in my
dreams
And again and again I see you.
Oh, slow's the dusk of this cursed sight
And still, all will flow into the fire
The Knave, the King and the Queen
And other sad faces in the game . . . '

Poems such as these are exceptional. There is othing very remarkable about the literature roduced to order day after day. Here are a ew typical instances, starting with some variations on the compulsory theme of cheerfulness (by Victor Tulbure):

'We whom the Party from the mud did raise
Build with the Party the great feast of Peace
That happy songs among the people may
increase
To cheer the unborn babes of future days.'

On Love and Productivity (by Ecaterina Mihaiescu):

'To her sweetheart John—a Stakhanovite miner,
Said Nora, our spinning mill's party front
liner,
To me it's May in December
For with my shock brigade this very day
I started work on quotas for next May
Oh, John, my joy is more than I alone can bear
Come, let's my joy in Socialist competition
share.'

This seems to ignore a serious problem which was discussed in the correspondence columns of *Scantaia* about 18 months ago, when several workers' wives wrote to complain that their husbands were so exhausted by the production drives that they felt unable to perform their matrimonial duties after a day's heavy work. Others protested that the production drives killed love, and the discussion assumed such proportions that *Scantaia* hastened to bring it to an end.

Another favourite theme with the official bards is that of the Western Warmongers. Thus in 1956 Mihai Beniuc, the poet laureate of the Party, published these verses:

'I stop and wonder: What God
Is he about whom the money-lenders shout,
Those heirs of the evil spirit
Who want again to dip their dollars in blood,
While they take good care of their fat,
And pile up gold in safes
And stuff their bellies with good things.'

Both in conception and in expression, this is a characteristic product of approved socialist-realist poetry.

The Novel

Calinescu's inability to write interestingly about heroes is common to other Rumanian novelists. Their 'socialist-realist' works revolve around two principal themes:

(*a*) The plight of the peasants under the 'old regime.'

(*b*) The corruption and sins of the 'old bourgeoisie.'

There is something very artificial in the official treatment of these two subjects. As a matter of historical fact, it must be remembered that in 1918 the great estates were divided up and over 80 per cent of the Rumanian peasants received holdings of 5 hectares and more. True enough, the land reform of 1918 did not solve the problems of Rumania's peasantry. Illiteracy, alcoholism and disease were widespread between the two wars, and it is not difficult to write shattering social novels against such a background. On the other hand, the great fertility of the soil and the beauty of country life offered the peasants considerable satisfaction. The grim novels about 'exploited' peasants which are now acclaimed in Rumania ignore almost completely advantages which the smallholders derived from their cherished plots of land. Novelists like Zaharia Stancu and Marin Preda have to imply that all the misfortunes which used to beset the Rumanian peasant were due to the evils of capitalism and private ownership. It is often claimed in the Communist papers that these novelists represent the realist reaction to the 'Semanatorist' school which began to flourish in Rumania about 80 years ago. The writers of this school used to concentrate on the idyllic aspects of peasant life (the purity of the primitive soul, the gaiety of the harvest feasts, etc.). Those who know something about the breathtaking beauty of the Carpathians, the unending sunflower fields of the Baragan plain, or the luxuriant flora of the Danubian Delta can easily understand the approach of the pastoral school, as well as its relative indifference to social problems.

The leading 'realist' novel on country life appeared in its final form last year under the title 'Morometti.' It is the story of a smallholder, Ilie Moromete, and the action takes place from 1937 onwards. Moromete is in a way the quintessence of the Rumanian peasant: cunning, stubborn, fatalistic, and an autocratic paterfamilias. His wife, whose second husband he is, has six children and the novel is nothing but a long succession of incidents illustrating the helplessness of the individual in overcoming the various difficulties with which he is faced: the payment of mortgage interest, the family feuds, a sudden collapse of the grain market, the harassing tax-collector, etc. At the close of th novel, the world of Moromete falls to pieces The whole edifice he tried to preserve with s much ingenuity crumbles. His three sons leav him, taking with them all that they could grab Tugulan, the poor peasant of the village, is th only potential positive hero. He denounces th Peasant Party, the Liberals and Parliamen in front of the peasants' council and is im prisoned.

Marin Preda's characters talk like rea peasants and swear without inhibitions. (Som Communist critics deplored this 'vulgarity' Generally speaking, the Rumanian smallholde managed to overcome his difficulties in the end In the province of Banat, for instance, the '*tw children only*' system was widely practised t avoid the splitting up of small estates (eac child inherited one half of the estate and marrie somebody who also inherited one half—b exchange of plots and adjustments, the size o the family plot did not vary much). Furthermor it was very difficult to recover loans from th peasants; in the 'thirties, a moratorium e tinguished all their debts. In a word, the situatio was never really hopeless.

The other notable novel dealing wi peasant problems is Zaharia Stancu's 'Descult Florile Pamantului' ('Bare-footed and Th Flowers of the Earth'). The action covers th peasants' revolt in 1907 and the first World Wa The enslaved peasants of the great estates a presented in very dark colours. They have wear muzzles while they pick the grapes. The revolt is put down with great brutality. One the rebels tells young Darie—'Don't forget th oppression, the humiliation, the mockery, th hunger, the blood in which your people ha been drowned.' A strong pacifist undertow dominates Stancu's work. The horror of th battlefields obsesses him: 'Under the Germa soldiers, the grass has not grown ver much . . . . Their bones covered in rotten to garments . . . . where the eyes were the empt deep holes—this is war, Darie. Will yo remember? Will you remember?' Stancu's nov ends with the hero's arrival in Bucharest, wh according to the Party's prescription he mu begin his struggle with industrial capitalism But Stancu did not pursue the matter and f this he was criticised by Petre Dumitriv *Contemporanul* (February, 1956). Dumitriv su

sted that the real book would follow: 'I think at it is the great responsibility and the great ty of Zaharia Stancu to continue that un-ished book.' So far, however, Stancu has t delivered.

There are, of course, novelists who try hard write about the positive hero and his ideal vironment, i.e. *Industry*. Without exception ese 'industrial' novels are undistinguished. ey belong to the kind which even Ehrenburg ndemned three years ago in *Znamya*—their ly merit is that they deal with the 'right' oject. The economic conditions prevailing at esent in the Rumanian Republic make it ficult for novelists to write realistically about verty—such writings would invite comparisons ich could only embarrass the present regime. concentrating on personal dramas which ppened to take place in the old days, the more ourceful writers try to circumvent the pitfalls.

he Theatre

The Procrustean demands of the Party have so had a crippling effect on Rumania's con-mporary theatre. During the last few years two riters have come forward as the leading play-rights of the 'new generation': Ana Novak and oria Lovinescu. Ana Novak, a sentimental ommunist, established herself with a play out the theatre world, 'The Prelude.' One of r characters exclaims: 'The time will come hen bad verse will be punished as perjury is.' er great merit is that even the villains in her ays seem human and even convincing.

'The Prelude' was attacked by M. Novikov, a ading Zhdanovist, on the grounds that the arty line on realism in the theatre is ridiculed the arguments of Bogdan, the negative aracter. In the play, Bogdan tries to justify worthless play with a good 'socialist' theme, ncocted by one Dan who wrote it only in der to make money. Novikov admits that the guments put forward by the negative hero are esented as a kind of grotesque special pleading and that this is obvious. Nevertheless, he jects to their very utterance, irrespective of ntext, particularly as they are refuted only by gue declarations about 'sincerity and truth' d 'holy art.' Therefore, argued Novikov, 'it ppears that according to Ana Novak there are only two ways: either primitive art on topical subjects or holy art, eternal and pure. In other words, exactly the two alternatives Pukhov-Saburov, as they appear in Ehrenburg's "Thaw," for which that writer was criticised with such severity.'

This outburst did not pass unchallenged. Ovidiu Crohmalniceanu, a literary critic, disputed it in an article in *Viata Romaneasca* (April, 1956). He suggested that the most important thing in the play was the conflict between the two opposing conceptions of the function of the artist in society: on the one hand, the bourgeois concept as represented by Mihai, an 'anarcho-individualist,' on the other hand, Ana, the embodiment of the Communist viewpoint.

Mihai: 'No, my dear, I am not modest. Time is short. What do I want? Everything—all one can want—risks, success, brilliance, the highest glory, the most resounding glory.'

Ana: (caressing his forehead gently)—'Be careful not to get dizzy!'

Mihai: 'Don't worry. Do you think that I'm an egoist? You're wrong—I'm only sincere. I would like to see everybody contented—above all myself.'

Ana: 'I, I, I, I.'

Mihai: 'Yes. I, I, I. Is it a sin? Perhaps. Only that the world is built on these sins.'

Ana: 'Which world?'

Mihai: 'Our world; the world of the Chinese, of the Indians . . . '

Ana: 'Of the monkeys.'

Although Ana Novak is basically dedicated to the Communist idea, the Zhdanovists attacked her because the arguments which she put in the mouth of her negative characters are too near the truth, too convincing, too dangerous. The exasperation and cynicism of some of her characters exist as much within the Party as outside it. The very fact that they appear as types in a play is significant.

Another play which was recently discussed at great length is 'The Shattered Fortress' by Horia Lovinescu. Like 'Morometii' it deals with the predicament of a family which heads for disaster under the old regime—only that in 'The Shattered Fortress' the family is an upper middle class one. There is the father—old

Dragomirescu, a pompous and mediocre figure, the elder son, an intellectual obsessed by the philosophy of adventure and the idea of the superman, his younger brother, and a few other relatives, malicious and parasitical. Under the influence of the older brother, the younger one decides to join the army to fight against the Russians (the action takes place during 1941-48). As he tells the family about his decision, his mother bursts into tears. Uncle Costica tries to calm her:

'But what Petru wants to do is very noble and patriotic.'

Then turning to young Petru, he shouts:

'Can't you see that you're crazy? Get all this nonsense out of your head. I forbid you to enlist! I forbid you.'

Matei, the elder brother, joins in:

'Drop this quixotic pose, will you!'

At this point the father proclaims:

'I give you my consent—what he wants to do is in the great tradition of the Dragomirescus.'

To his wife—'and you must be strong like a Rumanian mother.' This being said, one hears the air-raid warning and the whole family forgets its dignity and rushes with ridiculous haste to the air-raid shelter.

This passage is quite typical: crude characterisation and facile effects disfigure what could have been an interesting play. As it goes on we witness the moral and material decomposition of the family. Matei, the elder brother, has a mistress whom he does not want to marry. In the end, Petru returns home after having been injured in battle. He has lost his sight. He finds, however, a friend in Caterina—a girl from a lower social class, and, of course, begins 'to see' better than ever before. He becomes a positive hero and starts a 'new life.' His brother —the superman who failed—commits suicide, leaving his mistress pregnant and heartbroken. The parents fade away like shades in their darkened room.

Like Marin Preda, Lovinescu concentrates in his play all the misfortunes which could befall a family. This is not only inaccurate sociology, it is bad theatre. And it is dull. But then, under the sign of Zhdanov, dullness is the dominant feature of Rumania's 'new literature.'

PART V

THE BULGARIAN LITERARY SCENE AFTER THE 20th CONGRESS

by L. Brisby

I. De-Stalinisation

THE hopes raised by the decisions of the 20th Congress and the April Plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party were voiced in the organ of the Union of Bulgarian Writers, *Literaturen Front* (May 3, 1956), by Emil Manov, who spoke of 'a joyous mood of inner liberation' animating all writers 'who feel and believe that something is going to change in our literary life and that this change is going to be for the good.' The thaw was characterised by a hitherto unprecedented freedom of debate ranging over all problems affecting the writer and his work.

At first the discussion took the aspect of a systematic demolition of the 'cult of personality' in literature. The ravages caused by Stalinism were catalogued with gusto. In a frank editorial post-mortem *Literaturen Front* (May 17, 1956) pointed out that 'during the last few years Bulgarian literature has become grey, impoverished in thought and content, monotonous and uninteresting, and it has lost much of its truthfulness . . . . The lack of conflicts, the varnishing of life, the ostentatious display of prosperity spread like malignant tumours and paralysed the creative initiative of gifted writers, reduced to the lowest common denominator scores of widely differing individualities, confined thought in a shell and clipped the wings of inspiration. It is not necessary to give examples. Everybody knows them. On the other hand even the timid attempts to criticise such books abounding in themes of socialist construction (*stroitelni temi*) and heroes with 'constructive' professions, were treated by certain writers and certain circles as anti-worker and anti-Party criticism.'

Taking their cue from Soviet literary and ideological reviews, writers and critics attacked the literary practices of Stalinist times, the stereotyped embellishment of life (*lakirovka*), the conventional division of characters into good or bad according to their class origin

iematism), the equation of art and propaganda *lgaren sociologism*), the narrow interpre- on of the tenets of Marxist aesthetics *gmatism i oprostitelstvo*). As in Russia, a ourite target of derision was the 'positive o,' a product of the theory of the absence of iflicts and stresses in socialist society, one of se 'virtuous and in every respect simple ple, those angel guardians with excellent ntions who during a whole decade ambled ough book after book, devoid of flesh and od but always ready to oblige with "saving" ice, flawless but always eager to unmask vice, cerned about the fate of the whole world not about themselves' (*Literaturen Front*, y 9, 1957). Even die-hard Stalinists thought rudent to pay lip-service to the new spirit. s Christo Radevski, secretary of the Writers' ion, whose poetry must be counted among worst examples of officially sponsored sification, prefaced his apologia for 'socialist lism' by admitting that the method had been ed into 'an abstract, dry ideologico-political ma, limited to a rigid pattern which excluded manifold variety of life, and even more the tic fancies and particularities of each ter's individuality' ('On the disputable and undisputed' in *Literaturen Front*, October 1956).

Hand in hand with the demolition of old boleths went the restoration of long dis- ded values. Increasing emphasis was placed the psychological complexities of human ure. In a discussion of the annual report on prose fiction of 1955, which took place last e, Armand Baruch derided the attitude valent in the past, according to which to lyse the psychology of a character, especially of a Communist, was considered a dangerous of reactionary leanings. He concluded with lea for more writers 'who can turn man de out like a glove, as Dostoevski does with heroes.' Baruch's own novel, 'The Ralevs,' ten in 1955, the second volume in a trilogy ling with the Bulgarian war-time resistance vement, became the focus of a discussion on legitimacy of introspection and the per- sible limits of psychological characterisation. novelist was attacked by a certain B. Mitov excessive preoccupation with 'psychological eriments' which allegedly had led him to insufficient prominence in his novel to the role of the Party (*Literaturen Front*, October 25, 1956). Baruch counter-attacked in two long articles (*Lit. Fr.* January 31 and February 7, 1957) which developed the theme that psychological analysis in its aesthetic form was that essential ingredient without which literature ceases to be art. The debate was summarised by S. Karolev in the first two issues of *Literaturna Misl* (Nos. 1, 2, 1957), the new bi-monthly journal of the literary section of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In conclusion the author advocated careful dosing of psychology which should not be allowed to become an aim in itself (*samotselnost*) at the expense of the time-spirit. The historical novels of Dimiter Talev were cited as preserving the necessary balance between the study of the human soul and the portrayal of the individual in relation to his time, without which introspection was an arbitrary exercise leading to the twin sins of *psychologism* and *formalism*.

In the field of poetry, the revisionist campaign was led by the well-known critic and one-time apostle of Socialist realism, Pantelei Zarev. In an article entitled 'Lyrics and Lyricism' he attacked the Party oracles who had decreed that contemporary poetry should develop only on strictly political and ideological lines. This approach had led to the elimination from contemporary lyrics of a whole world of emotional experiences. The personal mood, the intimate feelings, the philosophical meditation used by the traditional poets should be restored to their rightful place. Zarev singled out for praise the timeless quality of a cycle of poems by Lamar published in the literary monthly *Septemvri* (February, 1956) which, he submitted, lost nothing by being free from 'exhortations to fight imperialism and to construct socialism.' Concern for the lyrical quality of poetry as opposed to its political usefulness made itself felt in most reviews of new poetry collections published throughout the year. A particularly virulent attack against uninspired versification came from the poet Bozhidar Bozhilov whose diatribe 'Verse Without Poetry' (*Literaturen Front*, March 7, 1957) provoked the wrath of the anti-revisionists. A direct consequence of the theoretical recognition of lyric poems as a legitimate alternative to militant social poetry is the rehabilitation of two of the best Bulgarian poets of the pre-war period, D. Debelyanov and

P. Yavorov, who were accused of 'decadence' and demoted in the hierarchy of classics by the literary pundits of the Stalinist era.

On the level of the theatre and the film, criticism was directed at bureaucratic administration methods, intolerant and arbitrary censorship, and conservative production techniques. In a discussion held in the Drama section of the Writers' Union, the playwright Kamen Zidarov spoke of 'a serious crisis of the contemporary Bulgarian theatre' in which the public had lost all faith (*Literaturen Front*, October 25, 1956). Analysing the reasons for the alarming falling off of theatre audiences, Leon Daniel, a director of the theatre in Rustchuk, went as far as to say 'we must not imagine that we hold the absolute truth regarding the theatre.' The implied admission that socialist realism might not, after all, be the only path to salvation, was by no means an isolated one. Heretical opinion was encouraged by the visit of the French Théâtre de l'Atelier which proved to one drama critic that 'theatrical art cannot be fashioned by prescription' (*Literaturen Front*, July 5, 1956).

Stanislavski's dictum that 'in art everything is permissible provided it is artistically convincing' was conveniently dug up to justify undisguised enthusiasm for the originality of the French productions, which in Stalin's time would have been condemned as 'formalistic.' Later in the autumn, the visit of the Belgrade State Theatre with its enterprising repertoire, including plays by J. B. Priestley ('Ever Since Paradise'), Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Bertold Brecht and Anouilh, provided stimulating contact with artists who had cast off socialist realism and seemed none the worse for it. Dangerous ideas nurtured in private conversation found their way even into official documents like the annual report on the 1955 production of children's books, which concluded by urging that 'from now on artistic perfection (understood in the widest sense of the word) must be our general slogan' (*Literaturen Front*, November 29, 1956).

While the superiority of the method of socialist realism was never openly questioned (a notable exception is the unusually frank statement of Emilian Stanev in the February, 1957, issue of *Plamuk*, the new literary monthly of the Writers' Union, launched at the beginning of the year), there was a perceptible change in the critical eva uation of Soviet literature. Thus in the customar tributes to the achievements of Soviet letters on th anniversary of the October Revolution, on writer expressed confidence that contemporar Soviet literature would overcome its shor comings, because it was the heir of the grea Russian classics, while another claimed tha the possibilities of socialist realism had bee proved beyond any doubt by . . . Dudintsev novel 'Not by Bread Alone'! (*Literature Front*, November 1, 1956).

A less servile attitude to all things Russia was a notable manifestation of the new clima of opinion. It found expression, *inter alia*, in vigorous campaign for the restoration of th purity of the Bulgarian language, suffering fro a surfeit of ill-digested Soviet jargon (cf. No 26, 28, 30, 32, 33 of *Literaturen Front*, 1956 The increasing prestige of the Chinese Com munist Party was reflected in the prominen given to the pronouncements of Chine intellectuals which tended to displace th reproduction of lengthy Soviet articles exem plifying the Party line. Although Shepilov speech to the Painters' Congress was printed full, it did not provoke anything like th animated discussion which centred round th slogan: 'Let all flowers blossom,' launched the 8th Congress of the Chinese Commun Party.

II. The Harvest of Revision

While it is true that the majority of boo churned out by the State publishing hou continued to serve up the old mixture, sligh spiced up according to the new recipes (soc *stroitelstvo* sweetened by love interest, milita virtue mellowed by human weakness, divisi of characters into grey and off-white instead black and white, etc.), there were several n works of real interest. Writers showed mu less reluctance to tackle contemporary them and the picture they drew of human relati ships under Communism seriously challeng the myth of a superior socialist morality. show corruption, careerism and petty rival in the new ruling caste of bureaucrats was b enough, but to portray the pillars of socia society as the exploiters of the labour of poor, as does P. Nesnakomov in his sh story 'The Benefactors' published in *Pla*

o. 2, 1957), was revolutionary. The heroine the story, a cleaner, says of the flat-owners o have reduced her to near-serfdom for the ht to live rent-free with her children in a relict box-room: 'They are no better than *lves*.' The word, a current cliché used to note bourgeois rapacity (there is a play led 'A Time for Wolves,' depicting the cruel *res* of the capitalist past) is chosen deliberately convey the same moral that Orwell pointed 'Animal Farm.' Under the cloak of a few perficial concessions to the censorship, Pavel zhinov is no less outspoken in his pessimistic y 'My Secret,' published in the December ue of *Septemvri*. The play shows a repre- tative of the managerial élite tragically meshed in public malpractices and moral ity. One of the characters is allowed to argue nvincingly that 'the most perfect morality is t which constrains people least and gives m the greatest chance of being free and ppy.' Significantly, the end shows the only eproachable character (from the Communist int of view) reduced by her broken marriage deep suffering which her ideological armour s been unable to ward off.

However, the greatest sensation was caused a novel, 'The Laskov Family.' The young thor, Liuben Stanev, had already given proof originality by producing an adventure story children which differed in choice of subject m the conventional pattern (variations on theme of the chase of enemy spies and oteurs) and presented the 'negative' hero a sympathetic way. With 'The Laskov mily' Stanev went one step further. The vel so clearly exceeded the bounds of per- ssible criticism and provoked such contra- tory reactions, that at first no one dared iew it. For the first time a writer struck at very heart of the regime and traced the rot the Party itself. The central character of the vel, the head of the Laskov family, is a mmunist of long standing who looks upon Party merely as a source of personal gain himself and his family. His son, Krum skov, is a journalist devoid of talent, principles courage, who uses his Party membership d to further his dishonest ends. Although the ckness of this portrait is unrelieved, nobody puted its validity. 'However strong the satire t is not exaggerated. Such revolting creatures can really be met on our cultural front', wrote Pavel Vezhinov, who likened the powerful impact of Stanev's novel to the impression made by Ehrenburg's 'The Thaw' (*Literaturen Front*, April 18, 1957). What caused offence was the presentation of the honest working-class hero Boris who is supposed to embody all the virtues lacking in the Laskovs, yet is shown as physically unprepossessing, and of such limited intelligence and sensibility as to have earned the nickname 'the ram.' Another portrait, that of the uncle, Georgi, was found equally unacceptable. He is an ex-officer who has been tried for his part in operations against the partisans. Yet this 'enemy of the people' is presented so sympathetically that one critic asked indignantly whether it was credible that such good, harmless, educated people would ever have been brought before a People's Court, while another gave a curious example of literary criticism as a function of the class-struggle by expressing his conviction that the character, if placed in the conditions of the Hungarian events, 'would not hesitate to cut off the head of his compassionate author.'

Satirical verse had a new bite and was often directed at targets of doubtful orthodoxy. The New Year issue of *Literaturen Front* (December 27, 1956) contained a medley of bitter-sweet epigrams in which Bulgarian writers poked fun at their Soviet colleagues. In the same number Orlin Orlinov's poem 'Boredom,' expressed the poet's *ennui* with the endless critical discussions and petty manoeuvres in the editorial offices and the Writers' Club, while 'Freedom' contrasted the liberty of two foals racing each other with the constraint of organised sport in a People's Democracy. In the same vein Boyan Balabanov mocked the composition of the Bulgarian Olympic teams in which one athlete was said to be accompanied by 'two leaders, three interpreters, four commercial travellers, and a host of assistants' ('Melbourne vignettes,' *Literaturen Front*, October 18, 1956). Satire inspired several good humoristic short stories, among which St. Z. Daskalov's 'Self-criticism' (*Plamuk*, No. 1, 1957), ridiculing the Marxist mania for public self-abasement, is particularly entertaining. A new venture which met with popular success was the series of short educational films 'Our Satire,' which in a light and amusing manner, held up to ridicule the eyesores of bad town-planning, the primitive

facilities of provincial hotels, the preference of young specialists for work, however unsuitable, which enables them to stay in the big city, etc. For the rest, the films of 1956 did little to dispel the criticism that Bulgarian film-makers 'have lost the human being behind the principles' (cf. 'Six Bulgarian Films' by J. Molkhov in *Plamuk*, No. 1, 1957). A notable exception was the feature film 'It happened in the street', after Pavel Vezhinov's screen-play, which was content to observe and to entertain without preaching and provoked criticism because the chauffeur on the screen did not conform to the ideal of a chauffeur in a socialist society.

III. The Line Hardens

Among the chorus of voices hailing the 20th Congress as a liberating force which would release the frozen springs of creative art the discordant sound of Stalinist recalcitrance was always clearly audible. Already in May, while the revisionist campaign was gathering momentum, *Literaturen Front* (No. 20, 1956) sounded a warning note by reproducing an article of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on the need for undiminished *partiinost* (party-mindedness) in literature. In July the Party organisation of the Writers' Union held a meeting with the avowed object of calling to order a number of writers whose erroneous opinions had been revealed in previous discussions. The Party line laid down at this meeting was elaborated in a long leader of *Literaturen Front* (July 18, 1956) which deserves to be analysed at some length. A reference to the fact that some writers had seen in the decisions of the 20th Congress an opportunity to settle old personal accounts may be taken as an indication that they had not missed their chance of hitting back at their one-time denigrators. Communist writers were reprimanded on three major counts: first, they had confused the regrettable mistakes due to the cult of personality with the fundamental policy of the Party which had always been correct; second, they had misquoted Lenin in support of their un-Marxist interpretation of artistic freedom; third, they had advocated the detachment of literature from day-to-day politics as a means of avoiding the mistakes of the past. Lenin's words about the specific nature of literature could on no account be interpreted as a justification for the rejection of Party guidance in all spheres of art. 'As regards th creative freedom of the writer, it should b *dictated* by his deep consciousness, his hig civic and Party obligations towards the people To ask the writer 'to remain one step behin everyday politics' was tantamount to preachin retirement to an ivory tower in complet disregard of the principle of *partiinost*. A thinl disguised threat in the form of a quotation fro Lenin followed: 'Everybody is free to write an say all he wants, without the slightest limitatio But every free organisation is equally free t expel such members as make use of the Part trade-mark in order to propagate anti-Part views.' A few weeks later *Literaturen Fro* tried a different approach. The leading artic 'Our people—hero of our literature' (August 1956) took the line that there was a profoun continuity between the realist tradition classic Bulgarian literature and its re-orientatio under socialism. This was no doubt meant silence the popular argument that the mi adventures of Bulgarian literature since th Communist take-over were due to the graftin of 'foreign' plants on to the native tree. Als by taking up the unusual role of defender the national heritage, the Party clearly hoped parry 'the attempts of the sirens of bourgeo ideology to entice us with songs about "creati freedom." '

Hard-core dogmatism found a vocifero spokesman in the Academician Todor Pavlo who used the formidable apparatus of a Co munist theoretician to blast the exponents revisionism. As the Party line hardened und the impact of events in Poland and Hungar so his pronouncements increased in frequen and volume. Pavlov's fulminations agai Polish, Yugoslav and Hungarian intellectua and in particular against his *bête noire*, t Polish writer Jan Kott, had a slightly comic about them, and an article in the Czech new paper *Literarni Novini* (reproduced by *Literatur Front*, April 25, 1957) made it clear that intransigent and patronising attitude had fail to impress the Czech writers whom he address in Prague early this spring. At home Pavl singled out for attack the well-known auth Academician Ludmil Stoyanov. The choice m seem strange in view of Stoyanov's cautiousn in comparison with the rash pronouncements smaller fry, but his dictum that 'the wri

ıld remain one step behind the politics of day, rather than find himself in the false unrealistic position of writing opportunist ks' was deemed too dangerous to remain ıallenged. It is certainly not a coincidence a Soviet literary critic chose this moment remind Stoyanov of his early symbolist ings, an uncomfortable memory which the demician exorcised adroitly with the ex- ation that symbolism had represented a t from the repellent bourgeois reality and could claim to have been a poetry of est.[1]

nti-revisionist literary criticism took the ı of a drive against what was now called ematism in reverse.' There is some justi- ion in the complaint that the simple-minded itive hero' of Stalin's day is being endowed a mechanical 'complexity' by the arbitrary ixture of incongruous attributes, while the ative' hero receives by the same formula a unctory coat of white-wash. The spate of ɔid love poems and elegiac verses prompts pathy for the remark of a critic that 'before y lyrical poem ended in a red tassel, now y civic poem must be concluded with a mental sniffle' (cf. G. Djhagarov in *Liter- ɐn Front*, January 3, 1957).

fter conceding that direct prescription from ve did not produce good results, the Party hard put to find a substitute for coercion. *iinost* by persuasion was an uphill job. n theoretic exhortations failed to have lesired effect, practical suggestions followed. ader in *Literaturen Front* (February 7, 1957) ɔosed a detailed list of appropriately ısan themes which the writers should take ɔr the good of their country and of literature. fact that the stirring events in Hungary Egypt had not inspired one single work of was found especially disappointing, all the ɛ so as writers had shown themselves quite ŋg to denounce publicly 'capitalist aggression' gypt, 'counter-revolutionary atrocities' in gary and Sartre's 'incorrect' evaluation ıese events. Yet, in a disquieting way, their ɛs tended to expose the flaws of socialism ulgaria, rather than unmask the glaring es in capitalist society. The advent of May 1, ıpted Angel Todorov, die-hard secretary of the Party organisation of the Writers' Union, to urge his colleagues: 'Now that imperialist reaction brandishes the treacherous slogan of "national Communism" and makes devilish efforts to divide and so destroy our camp, literature is under obligation to take up with renewed vigour the themes of proletarian international solidarity' (*Literaturen Front*, April 25, 1957).

The need for renewed militancy was the general theme at the annual stocktaking session of the organisation of Communist writers which took place on March 9. Todorov's report, 'The development of our literature during 1956' and the following discussion leave no doubt that the Stalinists are in ascendancy once more. The new literary magazines *Plamuk* and *Literaturna Misl* have been chided for publishing material which reflects 'thoughts and moods belonging to a phase we have left behind us' (*Literaturen Front*, March 7, 1957). Thus, after a year of lively discussion, socialist realism remains the official credo in Bulgaria. But one should guard against the temptation to see in the hardening of the Party line a reversal of the literary policies inaugurated by the 20th Congress, which never put in doubt the basic principle of *partiinost*. The freedom of discussion has produced some tangible results independently of the fluctuating fortunes of the de-Stalinisation campaign. One is the realisation that 'artistic form is not merely a silk lining for the ideological content,' another is the official admission that the great majority of works of art produced during the last decade under strict Party supervision are worthless. Whether, after the devaluation of the principle of authority by which it governed, the Party will succeed in restoring its prestige as an arbiter in matters of art, remains to be seen. In an atmosphere where fear is no longer the mainspring of public life, it is much more difficult to combat the insidious idea of 'creative freedom.'

[Developments since this article was written indicate that the Party has been unable to restore discipline in the ranks of the writers and the intelligentsia. A recent leader in *Literaturen Front* (July 18, 1957) openly admitted the existence of an important dissident faction accused of using the decisions of the 20th Congress and the April Plenum of the Bulgarian Central Committee as an excuse to propagate

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iteraturna Misl, No. 1, 1957, p. 103.

'unhealthy, alien, anti-Party views' and to revive 'some sort of liberalism.' The Party's latest offensive for the uprooting of literary heresy must be linked with recent political changes in Bulgaria during which the Stalinist chairman of the Bulgarian Academy of Science Todor Pavlov, was promoted to full membersh of the Central Committee. So far there are n signs that the recalcitrant writers are buckli under the regime's pressure. L.B.]

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